



# **Arqus Mission Statement 2022-2032**

*Arqus European University Alliance  
[version 14/03/2022]*

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## Arqus Mission Statement 2022-2032

### Preamble

The Arqus European University Alliance brings together the universities of Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon 1, Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wroclaw, eight comprehensive research universities from across Europe who share extensive experience in joint transnational projects in many fields, together with a common profile as highly internationalized institutions with deep regional engagement in medium-sized cities.

The Alliance's name stems from the Latin term *arcus/arquus*, for arch, representing the strong foundations the consortium has laid since 2018 to build bridges towards a shared future, to respond to the grand global societal challenges and to advance towards deeper European integration.

This renewed Mission Statement for the period 2022-32 replaces the first Arqus Mission Statement 2019-25; it builds on the Alliance's experience of working together since 2018, in particular during the first Erasmus+ work plan 2019-22 and the Horizon 2020 SwafS project Arqus R&I 2021-23, on the many lessons learned, not least during the pandemic of Covid-19, and on valuable contributions from our new members, Minho and Wroclaw, incorporated in late 2021 to complement our existing strengths and geographical balance, as part of the Alliance's expansion policy for the next stage of implementation.

The Alliance defines itself as a long-term initiative, beyond the constraints of individual funding streams and narrow project-based approaches. For this reason, this Mission Statement is a programmatic approach for the next ten years, including all aspects of Alliance activity (education, research, innovation, culture, societal engagement, global outreach), beyond the priorities of specific funding calls and programmes.

In these troubled times as we write, the Alliance wishes to express its strong commitment to peace in Europe and the world, and thus to reinforcing ties with Ukrainian universities in solidarity, and in support of the future reconstruction of the Ukrainian higher education and research system.

## **Vision**

A forward-looking, open, integrated, and research-driven European University, building transformative excellence with and for all

## **Mission**

To transform European higher education, research and innovation through deep cooperation and progressive integration, in pursuit of an equitable and sustainable future by together:

- Educating critical and socially engaged European citizens, equipped for lifelong learning, leaving no-one behind
- Generating excellent, open, challenge-driven, innovative, and reflective knowledge
- Acting as a committed multi-level societal and global player
- Bringing down barriers to effective cooperation

## **Values**

Arqus acts in defence and promotion of:

- the core European values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for diversity and human rights, solidarity, the pursuit of peace and justice in Europe and the world
- the core university values expressed in the Magna Charta Universitatum
- the unique role played by universities as open places of freedom, pluralism, and democratic participation, dedicated to the generation and dissemination of knowledge through research, education, innovation and culture for sustainable societal progress
- the shared understanding of higher education as a public good and a public responsibility which serves purposes of individual, social, economic and cultural development
- the conviction that through alliances people and institutions are stronger in their pursuit of the common good

## **Major Goals**

- Effective barrier-free cooperation at all levels of institutional activity in order to better respond to existing and emerging societal challenges
- Joint evidence-based institutional learning, arising from acting as a common laboratory beyond the mainstream, innovating in pursuit of systemic, structural and sustainable impact
- Engaged communities of learners, academics, professionals and alumni in multi-level habitats working together for sustainable progress
- Co-created attractive flexible challenge-based and research-driven academic offer
- Joint transformational disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and innovation
- Enhanced intercultural competence, global understanding and respect for diversity throughout our communities

## **Key identifying features of Arqus**

### ***Integration***

The principal ambition of the Arqus Alliance is the design, testing and implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation, which will serve as the basis for a truly European campus fulfilling all the missions of a university for the twenty-first century.

### ***Community-centred Arqus***

The Alliance centres its primary interest on people, as the essential component, resource and beneficiary of the knowledge society, the *raison d'être* of education in general, and higher education in particular.

Following this principle, Arqus is co-created and co-developed through the active contribution of students, academics and professional academic staff from all its member institutions. Arqus pays special attention to student participation and engagement, involving students as full members of its governing structures. Moreover, it aspires to continue and increase the involvement of members of the university communities as it grows and develops toward a true European University.

A powerful driver for our deep integration is the mutual trust built in domain-based communities of students, academics and professionals across our institutions. Arqus aims to institutionalize these through the Arqus Living Lab, a generator of multi-sectoral challenge-based proposals, the Arqus Communities of Practice, and the Student Agora.

### ***Inclusive Arqus***

The policies and activities of the Alliance are designed to provide quality provision and attention to the entire community of diverse persons participating in our higher education institutions, and to ensure their full participation in and ownership of this initiative. The strategy will address the three major groups composing the university community: students, potential students and alumni; academics; professional and technical staff.

The Alliance will continue jointly to promote widening access for diverse student and staff populations, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and actively attracting talent from less represented groups. The Alliance has developed shared policies for inclusion and diversity for all members of the university community, formulated in the Arqus Charter for the Sustainable Development Goals, and is especially committed to ensuring universal accessibility of its resources and activities.

### ***Excellent Arqus***

Arqus is composed of leading European research universities, each widely recognized for its deep commitment to excellence. As such, the Alliance is committed to attaining excellence in all of its activities: in student-centred innovative teaching and learning; in cutting-edge research based on the principles of open science, and aimed at contributing to resolve the huge societal challenges faced by Europe and the wider world; in knowledge transfer ensuring that the benefits of all knowledge generated by the Alliance have profound social impact; in active local and regional engagement, driving sustainable progress and cooperation amongst our ecosystems; in promoting culture and preserving our rich heritage; in initiatives contributing to public understanding of science and culture; in quality and impactful professional and learning mobility for all; and, finally, very specially in deep and efficient cooperation mechanisms.

Arqus believes that by joining forces the already substantial individual strengths of partners are multiplied, facilitating our pursuit of all-round and inclusive excellence.

### ***Sustainable Arqus***

Arqus is committed to driving sustainable change and empowering its communities to contribute positively through its research, education and institutions.

The 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals summarize the 17 major urgent societal challenges faced by our planet, and which Arqus recognizes as interconnected priorities for its joint activities, identifying itself as a “Partnership for the Goals” in line with SDG 17.

To this end, the Alliance has identified three major interdisciplinary challenges as priority areas for joint actions in the future, through our Arqus Living Lab, which will build on activities carried out in the first three years and on the Arqus Joint Charter for Equality, Inclusion and Sustainability:

**Climate change and Environmental Sustainability** aimed at achieving SDG 13 Climate Action, together with SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 14 Life Below Water, and 15 Life on Land;

**Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation** as an instrument for the achievement of SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities;

**European Identity and Heritage** embodied in European values as in SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, and working through our global outreach towards SDG 1 No poverty and SDG 2 Zero Hunger.

Furthermore, Arqus members are also committed to reducing the environmental impact of their operations, sharing best practices and finding shared solutions to develop their campuses as exemplars of environmental sustainability.

### ***Research-based Arqus***

Arqus promotes strong research collaboration within the Alliance and with European and global partners, in particular applied to the three major interdisciplinary priorities identified: Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability; Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation; European Identity and Heritage. To this end, the Alliance brings together best practice in research management and support, and has established the EuREP platform to facilitate the sharing of research resources, equipment and data. It also implements joint doctoral and post-doctoral initiatives as the basis for early-stage researcher development and to promote shared opportunities.

Arqus believes that universities are unique institutions in that they bring together teaching and learning and research as their two major missions, alongside transfer, culture and service to society. As such, the Alliance aims to exploit the full potential of synergies between learning and teaching and research, developing challenge-based multi-actor learning spaces.

### ***Interdisciplinary, challenge-based Arqus***

Arqus aims to stimulate open interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches to both study programmes and research to ensure the acquisition of the high-level, transferable competences required by the rapid evolution of technology, the economy and the labour market. Arqus believes this to be vital in order to ensure that complex societal challenges are addressed from the innovative and creative perspectives necessary for the pursuit of effective responses.

Furthermore, the Alliance will attempt to break down the barriers which currently persist between education and research within higher education. To this end, it will promote challenge-based approaches to teaching & learning, and ensure that research activities constitute an integral part of study programmes, allowing students to participate in ongoing research.

### ***Entrepreneurial and regionally-engaged Arqus***

The Arqus Alliance aims to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit and creativity amongst the entire university community and across different areas of activities, through mutual learning, and combining the complementary strengths of all its members.

The Arqus Alliance aims to address societal challenges of local ecosystems and seeks social and civic engagement. As leading institutional players deeply engaged in our local ecosystems, we will further devote our efforts to foster social, cultural and economic development, through transformational and sustainable partnerships.

### ***Arqus Global engagement***

The major challenges facing Europe are for the most part shared with the rest of the world, and require global approaches to find global solutions for our interconnected and interdependent world. The Alliance aims to set up joint global initiatives in education and research, building on the complementarity of members' strong strategic partners worldwide.

It further aims, through its Inclusive Excellence Fund and global mobility initiatives to build on that complementarity to promote Europe and Arqus as an attractive space for talent from around the world to study, research or work.

### ***Digital Arqus***

The technological revolution has brought more rapid change than at any other time in human history, radically changing the way we live, work and learn. The Covid-19 pandemic has served as a crash course in the use of technology for professional and personal activities, in the light of imposed restrictions on mobility and face-to-face meetings and activities. Consequently, Arqus has intensified its commitment to the digitalization of joint teaching and learning, of joint research, and of internal and external communication, awareness-raising learning activities, the enhancement of digital skills in general, alongside cutting-edge interdisciplinary research in the field through our Arqus Living Lab, involving social and ethical concerns and approaches. Thus, Arqus is especially committed to the use of efficient Open Solutions, including Open Source software and Open Educational Resources, which facilitate collaborative work and are easily accessible, in order to leave no-one behind.

### ***Plurilingual and intercultural Arqus***

The Alliance is committed to guaranteeing truly multilingual environments as an essential feature of our European identity and immaterial heritage. Arqus aims at making best use of the language diversity of our partners, who learn, teach and work in seven different languages and share the use of English as a lingua franca, in order to promote plurilingualism throughout Alliance and university activities, for the entire community and beyond.

The Alliance is further committed to moving beyond language competence in order also to promote intercultural competence amongst students and staff, as a core competence for an interdependent, globalized world.

## **Cross-cutting Enabling Strategies**

### ***A laboratory for institutional learning***

Arqus defines itself as a laboratory for institutional learning, and will continue its experimentation in innovative actions for deep university integration and inter-university cooperation.

As such, it will continue to design and test a wide variety of innovative actions. The results of this experimentation will provide a sound and informed source for deep evidence-based institutional learning within the Alliance, and for the enhancement of higher education policies at national and European level. Findings will be shared with other universities and networks and with the higher education sector in general.

### ***Mobility and Recognition***

Arqus partners share a strong tradition and long experience in student and staff mobility at both European and global levels, and are fully committed to the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, in particular to full and automatic recognition of all mobility study periods and of all diplomas and certificates awarded by partner institutions, including microcredentials. This principle of recognition extends also to various forms of recognition of staff mobility. The Alliance is deeply aware of the centrality of staff and researcher mobility to the attainment of its long-term objectives, and as such is working towards feasible shared policies for recognition in both workload systems and evaluation processes.

Building on this experience and existing cooperation, the Alliance has taken up the challenge of implementing seamless mobility of all kinds with full recognition for all members of the community, by promoting physical and blended mobility, alongside virtual exchange in a wide variety of formats, including - where appropriate - structured and embedded mobility in the form of joint programmes in all cycles. Intersectoral mobility during which students engage in work-based learning, research-based learning and service learning are also priorities, as a special form of experiential learning, strengthening employability, entrepreneurial mindset and societal engagement.



### ***Quality student learning in diverse flexible joint academic offer***

In order to enhance the quality of student learning and employability, the Alliance will both share existing academic offer and develop new joint flexible programmes in all three cycles, and in the form of microcredentials.

To this end, Arqus is committed to exploiting new forms of mobility and best practice for recognition of all kinds: for credit mobility; for formal, informal and non-formal learning; for prior learning; for service learning; and of qualifications.

Similarly, Arqus is committed to innovative and inclusive teaching and learning methodologies and staff development initiatives, including promoting the use of the opportunities offered by digital technologies, and of virtual and hybrid formats to enhance academic offer.

Arqus will promote student agency in the co-creation of flexible learning opportunities.

### ***Open and Citizen Science***

Arqus subscribes to UNESCO's position that "universal access to information through high quality education contributes to peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue", and is thus especially committed to the use of Open Solutions, Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Access and Open Data.

Arqus acknowledges that Open Science can increase diversity, equity, inclusion and the notion of scientific knowledge as a public good; the quality of, trust in and public understanding of science; as well as efficiency, innovation and wealth. Therefore, Arqus is committed to fostering OS – including Citizen Science, Open Innovation and Open Education – and to coordinating efforts in order to enhance Openness within and beyond the Alliance in a strategic way.

Arqus is convinced that OS practices and measures must be implemented in a transparent and participatory process in an accountable manner, paying attention to concerns regarding the transition to OS. Arqus commits itself to address OS at all institutional levels and to act on all political levels – regional, national and international – in order to contribute to a worldwide transformation towards Openness in science. To this end, Arqus will foster partnership, exchange of knowledge and consultation throughout the alliance to achieve the mutually-agreed goals and to align strategies and practices with universities across and beyond Europe.

### ***A long-term initiative for a shared future***

Arqus believes firmly that an essential element for its success and sustainability is the close link between its joint goals and policies and those of each partner's institutional strategy already in place and developed since 2018.

Partners are committed to investing in implementing and sustaining joint activities, within the bounds of their financial possibilities.

The cross-cutting participation of staff and students at all levels in partner universities in Arqus governance structures and work plans is the basis for sound community and identity building, thus ensuring strong potential for lasting cooperation in teaching and learning, research, transfer, cultural and outreach activities.

## Arqus Joint Strategy 2022-2032

### Summary

#### **Building strong structures for the future, based on the foundations laid in 2019-22**

##### ***2019-32 Progressive integration***

The principal ambition of the Arqus Alliance is the design, testing and implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation, which will serve as the basis for a truly European campus fulfilling all the missions of a university for the twenty-first century.

##### ***2019-22 Foundations laid***

To this end, Arqus has a long-term approach to building our shared future step-by-step. In keeping with our name and the architectural metaphor on which it is based, the Alliance considers that the first years until 2022 have been devoted to laying the foundations for our shared campus. Those foundations, the results of our endeavours, consist today of:

**Trust built** through establishing multi-level communities to ensure mutual knowledge and familiarity beyond our already linked International Office structures: multiple meetings (mostly on-line due to the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic) of task forces and small groupings made up of professionals, academics and students from diverse areas of activity: senior management (rectors, vice-rectors, directors), professional services (IT, communications, Quality Assurance, International Offices, Student and Academic Services, Student Admissions, Inclusion and Diversity, Careers Guidance and Employment, doctoral schools, research support), academics (through challenge-based and other learning activities and mobilities), students (through challenge-based and other learning activities, mobilities, together with student-led activities and representation).

**Deep mutual knowledge** through shared experiences and best practices in many areas identified as being of mutual interest: university management, management of international mobility, mobility windows, international joint study programmes, organization of PhD programmes, digital learning platforms, management of research resources, language policies, programmes and centres, staff development programmes, staff assessment and academic career management, research support services, teaching innovation and awards, student services, equality and inclusion policies and services, sustainability policies and programmes, children's and seniors' universities...

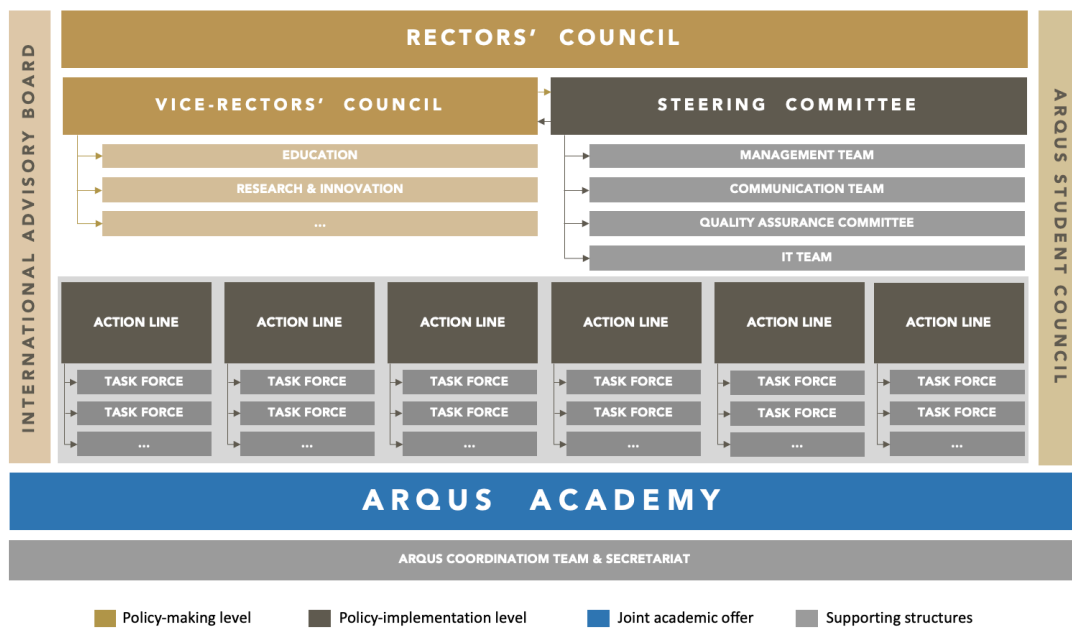
**Pilot initiatives and transformative actions** identified as being of mutual interest for the future of the Alliance: challenge-based summer and winter schools; full joint degree programmes especially at Master's level (three programmes at an advanced stage of development); the Arqus Academy as a certification body for joint learning offer as the basis for future joint microcredentials; mobility windows; Twinning initiatives (short-term group mobility for staff and students of all three cycles to promote joint initiatives); staff development resources (short f2f or on-line courses); teaching

excellence awards; short courses in transferable skills for doctoral candidates; a podcast series on areas of particular research strength; on-line seminar series in areas of academic interest...

**Shared tools and resources:** IT tools (research infrastructure; ECTS catalogues; catalogues of language courses; open language learning resources and on-line exchange; catalogue of internship opportunities; ...); Open Mobility agreement to facilitate seamless mobility for students, academics and professional staff; Arqus terminology data base; MoU on the mutual recognition of language certificates...

**Shared policy:** Arqus has developed joint charters on equality, inclusion, sustainability; a position paper on Open Science; recommendations for joint PhD initiatives; on language policy; on the European Strategy for Universities. Similarly, the Alliance has offered continuous joint input to the European Commission on the European degree, on Microcredentials, on Legal Entity for EU Alliances, amongst other key issues.

**Shared structures:** the Alliance has built a joint governance structure to facilitate the development of consensual joint policies and action plans, to consolidate participative structures to facilitate cross-cutting integration at all levels of the partner institutions.



This structure has been tested during the period 2019-22, adjustments have been made, following which it is now enshrined in a **Foundational Document**, ratified by the Arqus Rectors' Council.

Major impact of these initial transformative actions has been transversal internationalization “at home” of our internal structures, offices, services and for students, professional and academic staff in general, sowing the seeds for deeper future integration.

From its inception, the Alliance has promoted a participative approach to the organization and planning of its activities and structures. The Alliance has designed **joint governance structures** to ensure smooth and efficient dialogue and decision-making among the partner institutions at all levels: rectors and senior management; departments and faculties; academic and research staff; technical, administrative and support staff; students and including their associations and representative bodies. The Alliance has also instituted internal local Committees at each partner university to ensure internal follow-up and wide involvement in Alliance activities. Similarly, the

Alliance holds an annual event which rotates around partner institutions, focussing on an annual theme, and facilitating widespread participation of staff and students.

The Coordination and Management Teams act as a decentralized secretariat, an essential structure and resource for joint activities, and the foundation for a future possible legal entity.

**Acting jointly as a model:** Arqus has shared its experience extensively with other groupings at local, national, European and global level during the first funding period in order to communicate the added value to be found in its model of integration, and has also incorporated lessons learned by other alliances during this period.

## Building strong structures for the future

### *2021-23 Composition and enlargement strategy*

As already contemplated in 2019, in 2021, the Alliance adopted an **enlargement strategy** to incorporate new members with a view to strengthening its pan-European nature, to helping to fulfil our mission of bringing about inclusive systemic impact, building on the added value brought by new institutions of a similar profile in new geographical, cultural and linguistic regions.

We are pleased to welcome the University of Minho (Portugal) and the University of Wroclaw (Poland) to the Arqus community, thus adding two new institutions, two new countries, two new languages and cultures, and in particular completing the full range of regions in Europe by adding a partner from the East of Europe.



In response to the decision taken in early 2022 by the University of Bergen to discontinue its membership of Arqus from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022, Arqus will seek a ninth member who shares our profile, our mission and values, wishing to join our Alliance and adopt our overall strategy, preferably in a country in which we are not as yet represented, thus bringing further added value to Arqus and our activities, with a view to completing Arqus composition by the end of the first year of the next funding period.

**This current Mission Statement commences its period of validity in 2022 and lasts until 2032.**

For planning purposes, the Alliance has agreed to subdivide the period into two phases, building on the previous Mission Statement and the implementation of the first Work Plans (Erasmus+ 2019-22; Arqus R&I SwafS 2021-23):

- 2022-26 Building major structures
- 2026-32 Finishing touches leading to full implementation

### ***2022-26 Building major structures***

The foundations laid between 2019 and 2022 will allow sound building of major structures over the next four years 2022-26. Major milestones in the construction process will be:

In Communities:

- Consolidation of Arqus Communities of Practice
- Setting up of the Arqus Living Lab as a framework for challenge-based addressing of societal issues and Sustainable Development Goals (initially prioritizing Climate Change, Artificial Intelligence and European Identity)
- Setting up of Arqus Student House
- Consolidated staff engagement in Arqus activities
- Consolidated student engagement in Arqus activities

In Education:

- Gradual enhancement and consolidation of joint offer in microcredentials; transversal, discipline- and challenge-based modules, summer and winter schools and full joint degree programmes
- Arqus Label and Arqus Mention (towards the European degree)
- Enhancement and consolidation of joint staff development offer (teaching and professional staff)
- Joint doctoral schools (co-tutelles, mobility, summer schools, career guidance)
- Arqus Scholarship Programme (attraction of talent)

In Research and Innovation

- Enhanced dissemination of science and citizen engagement
- Adoption and implementation of Joint Research Action Plan
- First major joint research projects
- Reinforced joint catalogue and access to research infrastructure
- Enhancement of external stakeholder participation in Arqus activities

In Transversal Arqus

- Feasibility study and decision on setting up of a legal entity
- Arqus Strategic Think Tank (evidence-based planning for the future)

- Continued education and research policy input
- Consolidation of joint policies and instruments for inclusion
- Increased and innovated mobility of all kinds for students and staff
- Consolidation of Multilingualism and Intercultural Competence
- Increased joint global outreach

#### In Digitalization

- The setting up of an Arqus LMS for all virtual and blended learning offer, as the basis for a full joint digital campus.
- Federated student and staff identities for access to joint service provision
- Certification and credentialling processes for joint academic offer through the Arqus Academy

This four-year phase of the Arqus Strategy is structured through:

- an Education Work Plan, based essentially on the Erasmus+ Work Plan submitted in 2022, complemented by other funding streams such as Erasmus+ KA1, KA2, Digital Europe, national and regional co-funding
- a Research Work Plan, based on the Joint Research Action Plan drawn up under the current Horizon 2020 SwafS project Arqus R&I (2021-23), and continued under future Horizon Europe funding streams, and specific research projects arising
- a Global Outreach Plan, drawing on Arqus complementary strengths in different world regions, and potentially drawing on Erasmus+ KA171 and KA2 CBHE projects
- a Digitalization Plan, drawing on Erasmus+ funding, complemented by submissions to Digital Europe
- the design of a Strategy regarding a potential future Legal Entity, based on a feasibility study to be completed in early 2023
- the design of a Full and Detailed Roll-out for the third phase of Arqus 2026-32, based on the design of a full European campus

## **2026-32 Finishing touches leading to full implementation**

Between 2026 and 2032, Arqus will ensure full roll-out of its European campus, possibly with legal entity:

- Offer of full flexible European degrees at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels
- Offer of transversal modules incorporated into full degree programmes at all partner universities
- Offer of stand-alone and modular microcredentials to partner university communities and society at large
- Full credentialling with blockchain technology
- Stable transnational Arqus research groups with active projects underway
- Challenge-based interdisciplinary and intersectoral Living Labs in diverse societal challenges
- Open and Citizen Science policies fully implemented
- Joint Arqus staff (academic and professional)
- Full seamless mobility for all